

Monuments in the Structure of an Urban Environment: The Source of Social Memory and the Marker of the Urban Space

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Abstract. The major research objective was to analyze the role of monuments in the formation of local residents' and guests' representations about the city, its history and traditions. The authors consider the system of monuments' location in the urban space as a way of its social construction, as the system of influence on citizens' aesthetic feelings, as the formation of their attitudes towards maintaining of continuity in the activities of different generations for the improvement of the territory of their permanent residence.

Methodology. An urban monument is considered in two ways: as a transfer of historical memory and as a social memory transfer, which includes the experience of previous generations. One of the main provisions of the study is the idea that monuments can lose their former social value, transforming into "simple" objects of a public place. The study was conducted in the city of Yekaterinburg, one of the largest, cultural, scientific and industrial Russian megalopolises in 2015. The primary data was collected using standardized interviews. Four hundred and twenty respondents at the age of and above 18 were questioned on the basis of quota sampling. Interviews with respondents were conducted in order to identify key problems involved and reasons for shaping respondents' representations of monuments in the urban environment typical for the population of Russian megalopolises. The standardized interview guide included 15 questions.

Findings and discussion. Our investigation has revealed that different monuments fulfil various functions in an urban environment (ideological, aesthetic, transferring, valuable, etc.). The study has unequivocally confirmed that objects in the urban space have a different emotional colour background: people paint them in accordance with the feelings that arise in their perception. Hence, some monuments effectively fulfil the functions of social memory transfer: they are remembered, they tell us about the events to which they point. Other monuments in the physical space remain in citizens' consciousness only as a point on the map of the city.

It has been found that "old" and "new" monuments as semantic points of the urban space have an ambiguous perception and a significance for the citizen: some monuments are inscribed in mental maps, while others are ignored or their appearance is condemned.

Key words: urban environment, monument, sustainable development, social memory, megalopolis, original resident, perception



1. Introduction

One of the main principles of sustainable development of the urban environment is the creation of comfortable living conditions for the population and its successful self-organization based on the effective use of the economic, geographical, administrative and political potential of the city and the region. Today, Yekaterinburg is an actively developing and well-organized city as well as the administrative centre of the Sverdlovsk region and the Urals Federal District, city of international cooperation, a famous centre of science, sports and culture.

Monuments occupy a special place in the urban environment, which, on the one hand, can be considered as a mechanism for the translation of social memory, and on the other hand, they are a spatial reference and a marker of urban space for both of indigenous population and guests of the megalopolis.

Social memory is not only memories of events, people from the past but their preservation in the modern days throughout the translation of social information as a value-semantic system and its heritage. In the context of our study, social memory can be viewed in two dimensions. First of all, social memory is an institutional formation that is created by individuals, communities and groups that reproduce material and spiritual values in the field of value-semantic consensus. It structures and organizes a particular social space through a system of state structures (museums, libraries, etc.), through objects (monuments), through information systems. Social memory is a system of values, conditions and results of socio-cultural practices of individuals and groups. It refers to the experience, traditions of past generations and tries to internalize this experience by today's generation. Society's memory extends as far as it could, that is, to the limits of the memory of those groups, of which society is composed [1]. At the same time, memory is rooted in a concrete space, a materially designed object bearing a certain meaning [2]. The urban space is structured and objectified. It consists of certain semantic points [3]. The commonality of citizens, including representatives of various social groups (demographic, professional, religious, etc.) in the process of daily life, places them in the urban space, ordering their livelihoods and turning the city into meaningful space. Thus, the city becomes a symbolic space (monuments, temples, housing, etc.) because individuals fill certain semantic points with their specific symbols.

Monuments mark the space of the city creating and changing its symbolic landscape. The semantic message that they carry is refracted through the prism of their perception by the citizens. Monuments provide the formation of social memory by performing certain functions, the analysis of which makes it possible to understand those metamorphoses that occur when they are created and perceived in the recent decades. First of all, it is necessary to consider the function of ensuring the connection of times. Monuments are indicators that people in different epochs are guided by certain ideals, moral and aesthetic landmarks, the value of which is important for ensuring the continuity of generations. With their help the desired stability of the spiritual culture of the country is achieved, as well as the spiritual culture of the social group of people living in a particular locality where they are located, is being formed. Therefore, monuments are always associated with the history of functioning and development of specific communities, peoples, territories for a considerable time.

One of the most important features of the monument's perception process by a person is the emergence of a non-rational and sensually-emotional attitude towards it. It is formed both by revealing emotions, experiences of people who created it, and by certain aesthetic characteristics. Almost every monument is a work of art, even if it does not have a high artistic merit. To some extent it fulfils the aesthetic function of decorating the place where it is located. Creating a monument the author reveals the extent of his vision of the beautiful, the sublime in the composition, the images presented therein.

It is necessary to note the problem of the location of a monument, its connection with the buildings that are different in their functions and aesthetic image, located nearby, the place in the city where it is placed. On the one hand, the tradition of their placement in the centre of the city takes into account the space on which they will stand out, making an impression on the viewer and forming the image that they represent. On the other hand, modern urban architecture is characterized by the active creation of small forms, including monuments that are situated in the places, often in courtyards, which

maximally brings the viewer closer to the subject whose image they create. Therefore, the creators of monuments are usually well-known sculptors, architects, who are tasked with the help of artistic means to convey to the viewer (consumer / audience) the feelings that people have. Creators seek to convey their vision of the past and the modernity with the help of this work of art.

In this regard, many monuments of the past, located more often in the centre of the city, and devoted to leaders, commanders, artists, scientists have an ideological function. These monuments are designed to show the exceptional importance of the personality, to cause a feeling of admiration for them and for their deeds. Contemporaries and descendants give visual images of those who, with their lives, revealed the people's ability to do great deeds. Significant achievements in the past provide greatness in the future. Perception of the monument should bring forth the admiration of the acts of those who glorified the ethnos, the given territory and the city. Monuments in the urban environment are thus one of the elements of commemoration as the preservation in the public consciousness of the memory of significant events of the past that arises on the basis of the needs of the modern generation, groups and communities in affirming a sense of unity through a shared relation to the representation of past events.

Although the problems dealing with monuments have already been studied rather extensively; however, to the best of our knowledge, the role of monuments in the urban environment and their perception by the population of a megalopolis remain to be revealed. Therefore, the purpose of the present work was to analyze this problem in detail.

2. Materials and Methods

The following methodological provisions were used in the conceptual model of our study conducted in the large regional centre of the Middle Urals in Yekaterinburg in 2015.

First of all, an urban monument is considered in two ways: as a transfer of historical memory and as a social memory transfer, which includes the experience of previous generations. We asked our respondents to determine the city's monuments that were important for them and to justify their choice.

Secondly, the monuments were divided into "old" and "new" ones. The first includes those that are built under socialism, related to the events that characterize this era. The second group includes monuments created since the mid-1990s of the XX century until 2015.

Thirdly, the perception of specific monuments is determined by those cultural codes that have been established in the mind of the individuals in the process of their socialization. Each period of the country's history, a particular city's history forms a system of stable ideas about certain events, leaders, which monuments are created.

Fourthly, the importance of the monument to the individual is determined by the frequency of social "communication" with it. The more often a person meets with it on the way to work, home, during rest, the more stable is the social memory of it.

Fifthly, one of the provisions of the study is the idea that monuments over time can lose their former social value, transforming into "simple" objects of a public place.

The primary data was collected using standardized interviews. Representatives of different age groups ($n = 420$) in accordance with the age and sex structure of the population of Yekaterinburg were questioned. 420 city residents were interviewed. The survey involved 205 men and 215 women aged 18 years and older.

The authors have developed a standardized interview guide that consisted of 15 questions. 10 questions were closed, i.e. respondents could choose the answer from the list of suggested ones, 5 questions were opened, i.e. the respondents independently expressed their point of view. The respondents were asked questions relevant to the aim of the study in order to investigate the role of monuments in the urban environment and their perception by the citizens of Russian megalopolis.

3. Results and discussions

The study has revealed significant differences in the perception of "old" monuments by different socio-demographic groups. Practically all the monuments that exist in the central part of the city have been built after the revolution 1917. There were few monuments in a relatively small district town, which had been built in Yekaterinburg since 1723, when it had been founded. The majority of monuments have been built after the Great October Socialist Revolution. Old monuments had been destroyed for ideological reasons and new ones were built, fulfilling the function of glorifying the new regime. Before our time we have almost nothing left. At present the monuments are aimed at the formation of social memory of the inhabitants of a large megalopolis. The megalopolis is about 1500 thousand people.

According to the classics of sociological thought (L. Wirth [4], R. Park [5]), large cities make it difficult to establish the identity of citizens, a sense of belonging to one territorial community. Urban monuments can be considered as special constructors of the territorial landscape, contributing to its formation on the basis of the general social memory transmitted from the older generation to the younger generation.

According to K. Lynch, the city can be read as a "text" whose structure is formed due to significant and identifiable objects in space [6]. Urban monuments in the citizens' perceptions are, first of all, the bearers of historical memory, the communicators linking the past and the modern times. They remind us of important personalities and events. "Old" monuments primarily play this role. The population of Yekaterinburg considers the "old" ones as the monuments that have been created from the 40s to the 90s of the XX century and associated with the Soviet period of the city's history. They clearly express the values of the struggle for the Soviet power, the preservation of the country's independence during the hostilities that keep in a social memory: *"The monument to Vladimir Lenin is a monument to the great leader of the revolution, which turned the life of people both in our country and throughout the world. It's bad that Russia is now lagging behind in development from the Western countries"* (a resident of the city, 61 years old). The informant estimates the importance of the great leader from the position of our times. On the one hand, Lenin is perceived as the main subject of the change of world history in the twentieth century. On the other hand, the informant recognizes the fact that his followers have failed to realize the potential of the country, which was founded by the revolution, Lenin's ideas. According to the respondents, they are, first of all, the monument to V.I. Lenin (93%), installed on the main square, a monument to the outstanding commander of the Great Patriotic War (WWII) 1941-1945. K.G. Zhukov (42%), a monument to one of the famous leaders of the first decades of socialist construction, SM. Kirov (33%), a monument to the Ural Volunteer Corps (27%), which is also connected with the events of the Great Patriotic War. The monument called "Black Tulip" (42%) is dedicated to the Afghanistan's war and its victims. The attention of the respondents to the military memorials shows that they are of particular importance, since they give an idea of how the citizens understand their past and mourn for the massive destruction of life [7].

The list of the most frequently mentioned monuments by all groups of respondents included those that are intended to form a social memory about the great scholars and artists. It is very important for the citizens to fix in the memory of the offspring the image of their fellow countryman - the inventor of the radio A.S. Popov (27%), who has lived and has studied in adolescence in the city of Yekaterinburg. The monument devoted to A.S. Pushkin reflects the general admiration for all Russians of his mature work (26%). Our study has revealed that the location of monuments significantly affects the social memory. In Yekaterinburg, the overwhelming majority of them have been erected on the central street, which as in many inhabited localities of the country, is called Lenin Street. We have found that the respondents are able to identify five monuments located on the central street. Such an arrangement of monuments in the urban space provides an opportunity for a large mass of people to remind them of those events and persons that must be preserved in the social memory of the citizens, and also to strengthen patriotic orientations by reminding of the heroic deeds of fathers and great-grandfathers.

It should be noted that the guests of the city mention a successful location of the monuments, which allows them to significantly enhance the impression that they produce. *"These monuments are located on the main street of the city, around them there is a free space, allowing us to consider them."* (Guest of the city, 43 years old).

However, the monument does not often fulfil the role for which it has been created. An urban monument can be considered, firstly, as an object of territorial orientation and secondly, as a semantic point with a value-symbolic content in which collective associations are formed on the basis of accumulation of historical experience, not related to the idea of the monument. A monument to S.M. Kirov can be an example of such an association. It is located near the former Ural Polytechnic Institute (UPI), which is now called the Ural Federal University (UrFU). This object in the social space of the city has become a symbol of the university, but not the image of one of the Soviet leaders. The monument also has its placename "Near boot". Meetings of friends are appointed, students celebrate their proms, the festival of "Spring UrFU" is held here. This is one of the most important features of social memory. It is wider than historical memory, since historical memory is associated with significant events of the past and immortalized in urban architecture. Among the new monuments that have appeared in the last twenty years, the respondents most often called the monument to keyboard (56%) located on the river bank near the centre of the city. It is a symbol of modernity, dominated by information technology, the Internet. The monument to the founders of the city (47%) is a tribute to the tradition of celebrating those who has planned its development, managed the construction of factories, residential buildings on its territory in the beginning of the XVII century. Thanks to this monument the names of V.N. Tatishchev and G.V de Genin are fixed as the first leaders of the city in the consciousness of the citizens. A part of the city's indigenous residents (20.0%) believe that this monument is not well located in the architectural plan. *"This place is not the best place for the monument. The chapel is behind it, the building of the 30s of the XX century is next to it. It does not fit neighbouring buildings."* (A resident of the city, 57 years old).

The study has investigated that monuments which are not related to the historical past as well as the modern image of Yekaterinburg are of a particular interest. They are: the monument to the famous Russian artist, poet, singer, idol of the mid-twentieth century, V. Vysotsky (44%), to the famous American singer M. Jackson (36%), to the British group "Beatles" (32%). Speaking about the "Beatles", the respondents emphasize that *"its members made a great contribution to the development of world culture, to contemporary music ... They are my idols"* (a resident of the city, 23 years old). *The image of M. Jackson reminds them of "modern culture, his Moon walk, expensive funeral"* (a guest of the city, 25 years old), *"He is a great star, tragically dead"* (a resident of the city, 35 years old). These monuments characterize the connection of times. The aesthetic impact on the people is low, since they do not possess a special artistic merit. The ideological function is also not clearly represented. Perhaps, in the conditions of modern globalization there is a desire to present the city itself as the centre of the world culture. It is going review of the functions that the monuments fulfil.

It should be noted that monuments are often located close to large buildings, in different parts of the city. A special architectural and planning solution for their construction does not exist. The citizens have a chamber interaction with them. *"I like the fact that you can sit next to the monument to V. Vysotsky, feel close to him. He does not rise above the crowd"* (a resident of the city, 21 years old). This expresses a new role of urban monuments. New monuments often appear on the initiative of citizens, public associations seeking to decorate the city with their help, to present them as a place of concentration of both national and world culture, past and modernity.

4. Conclusions

We have demonstrated the feasibility of these methodological provisions by investigating the role of different kind of monuments in the urban environment and their perception by the population of Yekaterinburg. The study has shown an ambiguous perception of monuments by different social groups of citizens in Russian megalopolis.

A modern city is a field for the formation of complex contradictory feelings and assessments, because an urban space becomes a source of convergence and removal of various eras, embodied in stone, iron and bronze [8].

Our survey has elucidated that "old" and "new" monuments as semantic points of the urban space have an ambiguous perception and a significance for the citizens: some monuments are inscribed in mental maps, while others are ignored, not seen, or their appearance is condemned. Different monuments fulfil different functions in the urban environment (ideological, aesthetic, transferring, valuable, etc.).

Our study has unequivocally confirmed that objects in the urban space have a different emotional colour background: people paint them in accordance with the feelings that arise in their perception. Hence, some monuments effectively fulfil the functions of social memory' transferring: they are remembered, they tell us about the events to which they point. Other monuments in the physical space remain in citizens' consciousness only as a point on the map of the city. They are devoid of personal meaning. We have proven in practice that the phenomenon of social memory is much larger than the sum of individual subjective memories [9].

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